Faxing From The Internet, Part II

BY KEVIN SAVETZ

In February (issue no. 119) I examined a relatively new service that lets you send a fax by electronic mail. Yes, this service lets you send a fax without using a facsimile machine or even a fax modem. Since that original article, I have discovered a variety of other email-to-fax services. Although this was not intended to be a mini-series, welcome to Part Two of Faxing from the Internet.

Indeed, there are several options for sending a fax via Internet mail; some are free, while others are pay services. At least one service even lets you receive a fax via Internet mail.

TPC.INT Remote Printing (redux)

The fax-from-the-Internet service I originally examined was the brainchild of Carl Malamud (the creator of Internet Talk Radio) and Marshall Rose. They have been doing research on how to integrate special-purpose devices, like facsimile printers, into the fabric of the Internet. It works simply enough—send electronic mail to a special address, and soon after (if your recipient's fax machine is in a covered area), out comes a freshly-minted fax. You can send a fax to multiple fax machines, or even a combination of faxes and traditional email recipients. After the deed is done, you will receive electronic mail telling you if your fax was successfully sent or not. The service is free. Currently, however, this service does not let you send a fax anywhere.

A variety of companies, institutions, and citizens linked to the Internet have joined the experiment by linking a computer and fax modem to the net. When an organization joins as a remote-fax server, it specifies what areas to which they are willing to send faxes. As you might expect, the phone number of the recipient's fax machine becomes are of the email address. A computer looks at the address and decides if any participating fax machines cover the area to which you want to send a fax. If so, your message is routed to the appropriate server. Otherwise, you will receive electronic mail informing you the fax couldn't be delivered.

To send a fax by email, send a message

To: remote-printer.<info>@phonenumber.iddd.tpc.int

Where <info> contains information for the cover page. In <info>, "/" is turned into line breaks and "_" is turned into spaces. For example, the address:

To: remote printer.Arlo_Cats/Room_123@<1202XXX1212>.iddd.tpc.int

Would send a fax to +1-202-XXX-1212 with

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the cover page:

Please deliver this facsimile to:

Arlo Cats

Room 123

Note: There's another way to address faxes which some folks say is more reliable, although it's a bit harder to address. This method writes the phone number backwards, separating each number by periods.

To: remote-printer.Arlo_Cats/Room_123@2.1.2.1.X.X.X.2.0.2.1.tpc.int

The following addresses can be used to obtain more information:

tpc-coverage@town.hall.org—current-fax coverage (automated reply)

tpc-faq@town.hall.org —Frequently Asked Questions (automated reply)

tpc-rp-request@aarnet.edu.au—discussion list maintainer (human)

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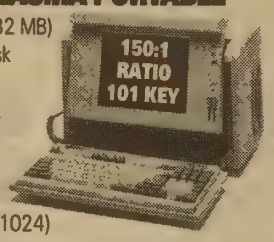

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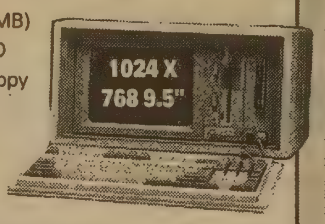

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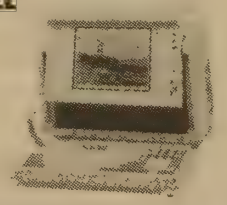

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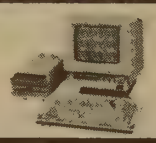

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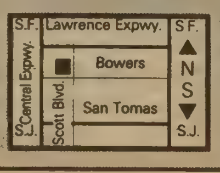

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Swedish University Network

The Swedish University Computer Network (SUNET) has a national fax service that can be used by anyone at no cost. Users in Sweden can use it to send faxes all over the world, but users outside Sweden can only use it for telephone numbers within Sweden.

To send a fax to Arlo Cats +46-87654321 (that's international notation for Sweden, make-believe phone number 08/765 43 21) send email to: Arlo_Cats@ F087654321 .fax.sunet.se

Note that you will always have to preface the phone number with the letter "F" for "fax".

For more information, email "faxmaster@fax.sunet.se".

Digital Chicken

Digital Chicken is—or was—a service that let users send faxes to Canadian government and citizens. According to the management of Digital Chicken, the service will be shut down in the near future: there is a branch of the TPC.INT remote faxing service (explained above) that covers Canada. The management feels there is no need for two fax services covering the area.

InterFax

InterFax allows you to send faxes via email within the US or internationally. InterFax is a fee-based service (billed to your credit card) but, unlike the services listed above, InterFax lets you send faxes anywhere, not just select locations. As of this writing, InterFax costs $5 per month, which includes the first five fax pages. Additional pages cost 50 cents each. There is a one-time sign-up charge of $25. For further information, send email to faxmaster@pan.com, or contact InterFax at PO Box 162, Skippack, PA 19474. (215)584-0300. Fax: (215)584-1038.

FAXiNET

Another fax-by-mail service is FAXiNET, which lets you send any text (ASCII) or PostScript documents to fax machines worldwide. FAXiNET can send faxes to more than fifty countries and plans to add more. The company can also receive faxes for you, which will be delivered to you via electronic mail.

Accounts for individuals cost 75¢ per page, plus a one-time $20 activation fee. Additional services, including adding your custom logo and signature to your faxes, are available at an extra cost. Corporate accounts are also available. More informa-